21: Kolarz J-4 (no date) 1952 R1 Soviet Union R1
Georgia R11

establishment of Soviet rule. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, had 60,000 members on the very eve of the collapse of Georgian national independence. After Georgia's annexation by Soviet Russia the Mensheviks and other opposition forces continued to exercise considerable influence on the Georgian peasantry, whose material conditions remained unsatisfactory, and on Georgian intellectuals, who temporarily were replaced in the administration of the country by Russian communists. By 1924 half the civil servants in Georgia were of non-Georgian origin and in Tiflis, the capital, as many as 63 per cent.[23]

In view of the comparatively liberal rule of the local communists, underground activities on a mass scale were then still possible in Georgia. All non-Bolshevik groups of Georgia formed a secret coalition under Menshevik leadership and also established contact with resistance forces in the Northern Caucasus and in Azerbaidzhan. On August 27th, 1924, the long prepared rising broke out. It was probably the biggest anti-Soviet insurrection initiated by any non-Russian nationality after the end of the Civil War. The centres of the rising were the rural areas in Western Georgia and the Chiaturi manganese mines, the most vital economic asset of the country. The rising was liquidated by the Red Army within a few days. A British trade union delegation which toured the Caucasus soon afterwards and which otherwise almost entirely endorsed the official Soviet attitude remarked: 'The insurrection probably had the sympathy of a majority of Georgians and would have had their support had it succeeded. But it never had any chance of success.'[24]

About 3,000 people perished in the rising. The régime showed a comparatively mild attitude towards the organizers of the insurrection; none of them was executed after a trial which took place in the summer of 1925. Later on Soviet courts were less indulgent and passed death sentences not only on genuine rebels but also on participants in imaginary plots against the régime. The rising was nevertheless a turning point. It led to the speedy liquidation of all opposition groups and the complete consolidation of the communist one-party system in Georgia. Inside the Communist Party itself conditions remained unsatisfactory. Official Soviet sources pointed out later that members of a gang of 'enemies of the people' had penetrated into high party and state posts, particularly during 1929 to 1931.[25]

Stalin's principal antagonists in Georgia were, however, not the new converts to Bolshevism, but the old Bolsheviks around Makharadze, the President of Georgia, and Mdivani, the Vice-Premier. For a long time mutual dislike and hostility were covered up by hypocritical statements which reached a culminating point in the celebrations held in Tiflis in February 1936 on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the Georgian Soviet Republic. The Georgian leaders to whom Stalin extended his congratulations were then already marked as purge victims.